

OAU, U.N. start peace efforts in Somalia

NAIROBI (R) — The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) wants to send a special delegation to the Somali capital Mogadishu to try to persuade warring factions to end six weeks of fierce clan battles, it said Monday.

"The objective of the mission is to explore possibilities of a ceasefire in Mogadishu so as to pave the way for a dialogue and peaceful resolution to the tragic conflict in Somalia," said an OAU statement released in Nairobi.

An ethnic power struggle between rival warlords Mohammed Farah Aided and Ali Mahdi Mohammed has killed and wounded an estimated 20,000 people since Nov. 17, according to the United Nations.

Earlier this month, OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim broke the African body's 11-month silence on the carnage in Somalia, offering to mediate in peace talks and adding that a peace-keeping force could be sent in if invited.

The OAU statement said that "one of the parties" had said it would receive the delegation and that it was still waiting to hear from the other one.

OAU officials refused to give further details but diplomatic sources said General Aided had rejected the OAU proposal.

U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar also said last week he was sending help to Mogadishu.

Special U.N. emissary James Jonah was scheduled to fly into the city of Friday to meet Gen. Aided and Mr. Ali Mahdi to discuss the revival of desperately-needed relief operations that have been disrupted by fighting.

A ceasefire between the rival clan fighters was set to begin later on Monday. But several truces have already been broken.

Aid workers in contact by satellite telephone with the Indian Ocean port city said house-to-house gun battles were still raging but the heavy mortar bombardments had died down.

An estimated 100,000 civilians have fled the city to escape fighting and look for food in surrounding rural areas.

About 8,000 tonnes of relief food have been stranded for weeks in the port's docks where a faction in control of the area has refused to release it, an aid worker said.

"Food is a kind of power," the

aid worker added. "They are literally fighting over it."

The Horn of Africa nation has been plunged into anarchy since guerrillas ousted dictator Mohammed Siad Barre last January and then turned to fighting each other.

U.N. proposals include the creation of neutral zones in the city such as hospitals, the port and airport as well as "peace corridors" that would allow food to cross battle lines.

Two months ago the U.N. said about 4.5 million people out of a total population of around six million faced famine. Deaths would increase if security could not be restored to allow emergency food distribution.

"If the food situation is not solved in Mogadishu then the fighting will not stop," an official of the International Committee of the Red Cross told Reuters.

Clash in north

Fighting broke out Monday in a Red Sea port in secessionist northern Somalia, and a United Nations official said the clash appeared to be between two army units.

"We understand a unit went to the barracks and the soldiers there refused to leave," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. "We don't know whether it was supposed to be a routine rotation or the units supported different political factions."

The official had no information on casualties in the fighting in the port of Berbera and said all relief workers had been told to stay indoors.

Northern Somalia, which is controlled by the Somali National Movement, seceded from southern Somalia in May and calls itself the Somaliland republic. The situation has generally been peaceful.

The Somali National Movement, which draws most of its support from the northern Isaaq clan, took up arms in 1983 and is the oldest of the insurgent groups that fought to oust Mr. Siad Barre.

The Somaliland republic's boundaries are those of the former British Somaliland — a protectorate that joined with the Italian Somaliland in 1960 to form the country Somalia.

The secessionist government has been seeking international recognition,

Border talks with Oman spark row in Yemen

ADEN, Yemen (R) — A row has broken out in Yemen over discussions that the government is about to sign away 15,000 square kilometres of territory to neighbouring Oman before a new constitution takes full effect.

Political parties and organisations in the southeastern border province of Al Mahra said in a joint statement last week a draft border agreement included the territorial concession.

"We hold the leadership responsible for the results if the opinion of the province's people is not considered," it added.

President Ali Abdullah Saleh said earlier this month the two countries would sign a formal border demarcation agreement before the end of this year.

But the government denies any deal is ready for signing.

A Foreign Ministry official told Reuters Monday that the negotiations with Oman had not ended. "Yemeni-Omani talks on demarcating the borders will resume early next year," he added.

One of the main opposition parties, the Yemeni Unionist Party, has attacked the alleged border agreement on the grounds that the government is only transitional.

It is operating under a constitution drawn up when North and South Yemen united in a single state in May 1990. The constitution does not take full effect until after general elections in November 1992.

The territory in question is in what used to be South Yemen, while the unified state is dominated by the more populous North.

The Yemeni Unionist Party said the present government did not have the constitutional right to decide on matters of national sovereignty.

"The present authority ... bears full responsibility for the consequences (such as) the squandering of rights or national sovereignty," it said in a statement.

The party said the government should publish details of the border talks with Oman so that people would be able to say what they thought of any agreement.

South Yemen, which was the Arab World's only Marxist state, backed separatist guerrillas across the border in southern Oman during the 1960s and 1970s.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Dealers offer Israel sophisticated weapons

TEL AVIV (AP) — Arms dealers from the former Soviet Union are offering Israel weapons traditionally sold to Arab countries, including advanced warplanes, a newspaper reported Monday. The Haaretz daily wrote that the "surprising offers" include weapons Israel once lacked any information about, those considered top secret and supplied only to elite Red Army units. Among the items on the list are advanced MiG-29 fighter planes supplied to Syria and an advanced ground-to-air radar missile system, the newspaper said. The defence ministry declined comment on the report. Israel could use some weapons for intelligence purposes but has little operational need for them since it is well-equipped with advanced U.S.-made armaments, the Haaretz daily wrote. The uncertainty surrounding the military industries in the former Soviet Union, due to the economic and political upheaval in the newly independent republics is another deterrent for purchasing these weapons, the paper said. The dealers are offering unusually low prices compared to similar Western-made weapons systems, but also insist on being paid in cash, Haaretz said. "It is possible theoretically to purchase Soviet arms systems for intelligence reasons only, in order to study them and be able to develop counter-defence systems," reporter Reuven Pedhatz, the newspaper's military correspondent, wrote.

Iran plans more Afghan relief flights

NICOSIA (R) — Iran, which angered Kabul last month by air-dropping food in central Afghanistan, said on Monday it planned further relief operations for hungry Afghans. Seifollah Vahid-Dastjerdi, head of Iran's Red Crescent society, said Tehran would send planes as soon as Islamabad agreed to its request for permission to airlift supplies to Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Vahid Dastjerdi, quoted by the official Iranian news agency IRNA, said Iran planned to send relief supplies to Afghanistan but did not elaborate. Last month an Iranian transport plane dropped food over the Afghan city of Damiyan in an attempt to prevent an exodus of tribesmen from the central Hazarajat region where there are severe shortages. A week later the Afghan foreign ministry issued a statement warning that no unauthorised aircraft would be allowed to enter Afghanistan's airspace. It said no country had a right to carry out relief operations in Afghanistan without Kabul's permission. About five million refugees from the civil war in Afghanistan live in Iran and Pakistan.

Palestinians recognise former Soviet republics

TUNIS (AP) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on Sunday officially recognised the 15 republics of the former Soviet Union as independent states. The PLO's decision-making Executive Committee called for the new states to take up an active role in the Middle East peace process, according to the Palestinian news agency Wafa. The Wafa communique expressed hope the new states can "overcome their difficulties and be able to contribute to international stability." The Soviet Union was the official co-sponsor, with the United States, of historic Middle East peace talks that opened in Madrid in October and continued last month in Washington.

Two Americans held in Iraq

KUWAIT (R) — Two Americans who disappeared on the Kuwaiti frontier more than three weeks ago are being held in Iraq, the U.S. embassy said Monday. An embassy spokesman refused to give the names, occupations or any other details of the men who vanished on Dec. 4. The confirmation that they were held in Iraq was the first public comment on their fate since they vanished on Dec. 4. Iraq has made no mention of their detention. American diplomats were first alerted to the disappearance when one of the men's friends telephoned the embassy to say the two had not returned from a trip to the border. An embassy spokesman said on Dec. 8 that the men were on a business trip.

Hashish, heroin seized in Lebanon drug haul

BEIRUT (AP) — Police on Sunday seized 700 kilograms of hashish and 20 kilograms of heroin in a major haul that signalled a new effort to throttle one of the world's main sources of narcotics.

Police chief Mohammad Kobrosli estimated the street value of the drugs seized at \$3.5 million. He gave no details of the operation.

But a police spokesman, who could not be named in line with standing regulations, said an army soldier, Elie Najjar, was arrested in the operation during which there was a brief exchange of fire.

"This was the biggest amount of heroin ever seized in Lebanon," said the spokesman. He said police raided Mr. Najjar's hideout in a Christian neighbourhood of Beirut as he was readying the narcotics for shipment to the United States and the Netherlands.

He had most of the drugs concealed in six barrels, said the policeman.

Mr. Najjar tried to evade arrest by engaging the policemen in a shootout, but they overwhelmed him. The spokesman reported no casualties.

He said Mr. Najjar had been under police surveillance for some time.

On Saturday, customs officers at Beirut airport arrested two men trying to smuggle 865 grams of heroin to Canada and Australia.

Lebanon is one of the world's primary sources of hashish. It produces 700-800 tonnes of the drug a year. During the civil war years, several heroin processing plants were established in the country.

Syrian troops, in Lebanon to help the government restore law and order after 16 years of war, have been destroying hashish plantations in east Lebanon.

A few months ago, Syrian tanks, trucks, bulldozers and armoured personnel carriers were seen driving through the fields of the Bekaa Valley, trashing hundreds of acres of hashish plantations.

Also, Syrian authorities have reported seizing hundreds of kilograms of hashish, smuggled from Lebanon into Syria for export to the Gulf.

Kuwaiti opposition aims for democracy in 1992

KUWAIT (R) — Opposition leaders said Monday 1992 would be the year of political confrontation with the government over democracy in Kuwait.

The first free elections for the National Assembly in seven years are due next October. They were promised by the emir, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah, after the U.S.-led allies liberated Kuwait from seven months of Iraqi occupation in February.

"The year 1992 is the year of confrontation for democracy," Ahmad Al Dayeen, a leader of the liberal Kuwait Democratic Forum (KDF), told Reuters.

"The elections are a chance for an offensive for democracy."

The main concern in Kuwait now is the restoration of democracy and the release of the freedoms of press and speech," said KDF chief Abdullah Al Nibari.

Although a monarchy controlled by the Sabah family, Kuwait has had a lively parliament for most of the time since independence in 1961.

"The fight next year is a fight for the protection of the constitution ... and its reimplementation which would lead to the reactivation of the legislative bodies," Mr. Nibari said.

The ruling family wanted to preserve its privileges and remain above the law, but unconstitutional and unacceptable to Kuwaitis, he said.

The opposition wanted social, educational and administrative reforms and implementation of the constitution as well as lifting of censorship.

Iran eases, slightly, its standoff with Swiss embassy

GENEVA (AP) — Iran stopped searching Swiss diplomats entering their embassy in Tehran on Monday, but otherwise continued restrictions on the staff that prevented a diplomat from leaving Sunday on vacation, Bern officials said.

Meanwhile, Zeyar Sarhadi, the Iranian whose arrest in Bern last Monday set off the latest tensions between Switzerland and Iran, formally filed a request that he be released from custody.

Switzerland closed the embassy on Sunday indefinitely because of the Iranian restrictions, which in the process shut off the United States' interest section in Tehran. The Swiss have represented U.S. concerns in Tehran since the 1979 occupation of the American embassy there.

White House spokesman Martin Fitzwater said the United States still has other channels of communication with Iran, Algeria also acts as a go-between; it administers the Iranian interest section in Washington.

Switzerland's foreign interest section, which also handles South African affairs, makes up a large part of the Tehran embassy, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Marco Camerini.

The foreign section consists of three Swiss and seven local employees, he said. The embassy has eight diplomats altogether.

Iran claims Mr. Sarhadi is an employee of the Bern embassy and is thus immune from arrest, but the Swiss say he entered Switzerland on a tourist visa last September and has never been registered with them as a diplomat or embassy employee. They acknowledged that he has been

staying at the embassy. An immediate decision by the federal court on Mr. Sarhadi's request was unlikely. Swiss authorities have a chance to respond, and France has until Jan. 10 to file a request for the extradition of the Iranian, whom the French have sought in connection with the slaying of an exiled Iranian leader.

In Tehran Swiss Charge d'Affaires Walter Haffner said in a telephone interview with the Associated Press' Swiss service that Swiss employees of the embassy were allowed on Monday to enter the embassy without being searched or questioned by the Iranian guards outside.

Iranian employees of the embassy, however, still are searched and put through long interrogations, as they have been since last week, said Mr. Haffner.

Spirits of the embassy staff remained good, however, Mr. Haffner said. The exception was Christa Felder, the diplomat who was prevented from leaving on Sunday, Mr. Haffner said. She was to begin her honeymoon, he added.

The Iranians confiscated her diplomatic passport, but the embassy was allowed to pick it up from the airport several hours later.

The Swiss arrested Mr. Sarhadi at the request of France, who issued an international warrant accusing him of renting apartments and providing other assistance for the killers of an exiled Iranian leader.

Shahpour Bakhtiari, the late Shah's former prime minister, was killed at his home near Paris last Aug. 6.

Iran's defence minister ends Qatar visit

MANAMA, Bahrain, (R) — Iran's Defence Minister Akbar Torkan left Doha Monday following military and economic talks with Qatari officials, the Qatari News Agency reported. Mr. Torkan, on his first visit to Qatar, had talks with Qatari Crown Prince and Defence Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani and inspected air and naval bases and Qatari plants and factories.

Beirut bomb

(Continued from page 1)

blow to a renewed government security in Lebanon.

It was the bloodiest Lebanon since 15 years war ended in October with the ousting of the Michel Aoun by Syrian troops.

Explosives packed a wrecked the administration at the American University Beirut on Nov. 8, killing four. There was no claim of responsibility for that Israeli agents were reported to have been behind it.

Interior Minister Samir Tawil said that the Monday's blast that killed four would begin immediately track down the culprit.

"We don't know whether he find him, but I promise he hanged here at the scene of crime," he said.

The bomb carved a crater metres deep on Mamouna one block from the Fakhri barracks where pro-Israeli demonstrators once held Western hostages.

The Syrian army, wrested the barracks from Hizbullah in 1987, has abandoned the barracks.

"Is this a new year? Where is the government what happened to the peace that peace has finally broken in Lebanon?" sobbed Mr. Chehab, 47, whose son was injured in the blast.

"One becomes disgusted in such a place," he said. "Animals elsewhere are much better."

Hospitals blared radio for blood donations as workers sifted through the wreckage.

Among the survivors three year-old girl, daughter of a doctor, was found with a piece of chocolate in her mouth which was covered with blood. She was dug out of the rubble in a state of shock.

Settlers open fire

(Continued from page 1)

ties, members of Mr. Shamir's coalition, have threatened against the budget when it before parliament if refused extra funds.

Their demands took on weight following the resignation of Agriculture Minister Eitan, which weakened Mr. Shamir's majority from 66 to the 120-member Knesset (parliament).

The Dec. 31, deadline for the budget is also being up by demands from right parties. If Mr. Shamir fails a majority vote for the budget will probably have to be retable.

The daily Haaretz reported that Finance Minister Moshe Arens agreed to pay an extra million shekels (\$325 million) an additional 5,000 houses in the occupied territories.

The increase means two of government-sponsored housing would be built in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

A finance ministry spokesman confirmed the Tel Aviv Molelet parties had rejected extra funding for settlements declined to comment on whether promised.

Dodi Zucker, lawmaker of the Citizens' Rights Movement, which opposes the settlements, said the agreement was not worked out.

He said the parties had decided 5,000 additional units in the occupied territories in the occupied territories.

The finance ministry spokesman in the past of 3,000-4,000 in 1992.

Mr. Zucker said the agreement will "severely endanger chances of getting the guarantees from the States and will prove to be what the Shamir government really means when it says

Deadline brings end to military involvement in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON (AP) — The 12-year conflict in Afghanistan enters a new phase Wednesday with the formal end of all U.S. and Soviet military involvement after years of each side supporting rival factions.

The deadline was set in September by the Bush administration and leaders of the former Soviet Union. U.S. officials are confident that both sides will adhere to the agreement.

Nonetheless, there is no early end to the fighting in sight as the leftist government in Kabul and the anti-communist rebel movement have yet to open peace talks despite intensive United Nations mediation efforts.

An estimated 1.5 million have been killed in the war, with more than three million maimed or wounded and five million displaced to exile in Pakistan and Iran. One in every three refugees worldwide is an Afghan.

U.S. officials, asking not to be identified, said the last of the U.S. deliveries to the rebels arrived in Pakistan sometime in October. Under the agreement

with the Soviets, the military aid "pipeline" between Pakistan and Afghanistan is to be cut off by Jan. 1. Pakistan has been the rebel headquarters and transit point for U.S. aid deliveries for years.

As for the Russian side, one official said, "there has been a significant fall off in their assistance" in the weeks preceding the deadline.

Leaders of the rebel movement have been told that Russian fuel deliveries to the leftist government in Kabul also will be suspended even though that step is not required under the September agreement.

The fate of Afghanistan was once a major security concern to Moscow but that has all changed now since the Soviet Union has been replaced by the commonwealth of independent states.

The main Russian concern in Afghanistan nowadays is to obtain an accounting for the 300 estimated soldiers missing.

Twelve years ago last Friday then-President Leonid Brezhnev dispatched what was to become a force of more than 100,000 troops

to put down an uprising against the communist regime in Kabul that was installed in April 1978. The last of the Soviet troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan in February 1989.

The Afghan issue was one of many during the 1980s that brought the United States and the Soviet Union into an increasingly bitter rivalry. President Jimmy Carter authorised a covert operation to aid the Afghan rebels.

Nations such as Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are believed to be sending weaponry into Afghanistan, ignoring U.S. appeals for a cutoff.

Aggravating the situation has been an increasing tendency among rival factions of the rebel movement to fight one another in a bid for military supremacy.

The main reason peace talks have not begun is that the rebels have refused talks with representatives of Afghan President Najibullah. As U.S. officials see it, the peace process can make headway only when all outside military assistance to the various factions ceases.

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JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:30 Special programme for New Year
19:00 News in French
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Evening shade
21:00 Concert by Belinda Carlisle
21:30 News in English

PRAYER TIMES

04:54 Fajr
06:16 Sunrise
11:26 Dhuhr
14:12 Asr
16:36 Maghrib
17:58 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedisch, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440

De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasanta Church Tel. 622666
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 625441
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 626543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Armenian International Church Tel. 683326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811295
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Tel. 828284, 654932
Church of the Nazarene Tel. 675691

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be cold, cloudy, and rainy and winds will be southerly fresh. In Agaba, it will be partly cloudy and rainy at times and winds will be southerly fresh and seas rough.

Min/Max temp.
Amman 3/8
Agaba 5/15
Djessra 2/10
Jordan Valley 7/15

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 11, Agaba 16. Humidity readings: Amman 71 per cent, Agaba 40 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Khalid Ma'addi 743500
Dr. Khalil Abdo 795392
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim 891256
Dr. Ghaleb Zawiadeh 736123
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Asama pharmacy 637055
Najmeh pharmacy 626762
Al Salim pharmacy 636720
Yacoub pharmacy 649445
Shu'eib pharmacy 637660

IRBID:

Dr. Radeya Al Sead (—)
Al Sharaf pharmacy (275825)

ZARQA:

Dr. Akram Haddad (—)
Khalil pharmacy 965417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate 630341
Rescue Police 199
Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 63021
Hotel Complaints 602800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230

CENTRAL AMMAN TELEPHONE

Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Radio Jordan 773111
Water Authority 774111
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power 636381
RJ Flight Information 06-53230
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 06-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 812813/22
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Abdali Maternity, J. Amn 64241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mafkas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 664171/4
Shu'eibani Hospital 649121
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musharraf Hospital 66727/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Islamic, Al-Majmaeen 777101/3

AL-BASHIR, J. Ashrafieh

Army, Marfa 775111/26
Queen Alia Hospital 891611/15
Amal Hospital 602240/20
ZARQA:
Zarga Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarga National Hospital (09)90560
Bin Sima Hospital (09)96732
Al Hlana Modern Hospital (09)90999
BBQ:
Princess Beama Hospital (02)225555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)27275
The Al Nafesa Hospital (02)267100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

Criticism of government grows prior to budget approval

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Lower House of Parliament's approval of the 1992 fiscal budget Monday followed two days of intense debate by deputies.

House members, in addition to requesting a greater piece of the budget for their constituencies, criticised the government for its performance in implementing past budgets. Criticism ranged from not following through on proper projects to lack of proper supervision of some government departments.

Deputy Attia Al Shawan emphasised in his address the need for maintaining the strongest possible cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities in the coming year.

The criticised the budget for giving more allocations and attention to the infrastructure instead of focusing on an expansion of production. He said that more attention should have been given from the small and medium-sized projects in industry and agriculture to absorb more unemployed people.

Deputy Majed Khalifa and Deputy Abdul Aziz Jaber asked that the government give more attention to medical care and schools. Deputy Nayer Al Hadid, who is a member of the House, said that the government should focus on the two-shift school system. They called on the government to build hospitals at the level of the southern and northern regions in the Kingdom and to carry out the electrification of the rural areas of the Kingdom.

Deputy Ahmad Al Abbadi called on the government to live up to its promises of dealing with the problems of poverty, unemployment and soaring prices as well as old debts. He said that the government has received JD 14 million in aid from the United States, which was never spent on small-scale income generating projects to reduce unemployment and poverty.

He demanded that the government provide the House with details about areas where the aid was spent.

Deputy Yusef Al Azm spoke on behalf of all deputies from the Amman Governorate, demanding that the government direct attention to water, road and other infrastructure.

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Lower House of Parliament members discussed the proposed 1992 budget Monday. Some members, in addition to calling for specific



projects, questioned the government's fiscal responsibility (photo by Yusef Al 'Aban)

municipal services in the Maan and Aqaba regions. He also called on the government to develop the health centre at Wadi Mousa into a hospital and for the National Aid Fund to be made to cover a wider sector of the population.

Deputy Fuad Al Khalafat urged the government to place the qualified people in government positions, especially those with decision-making powers. The next stage, he said, requires careful planning and feasible programmes with the government maintaining strict control and supervision.

The deputy criticised financial practices by some departments like the ministries of foreign affairs and finance as well as the radio and television corporation and the Civil Aviation Authority. He demanded that the Audit Bureau impose stricter control on their financial operations.

Deputy Mahmoud Al Hweil drew attention to the school dropouts in the Jordan Valley region and demanded that the education process in the rural regions be developed. He called for farmers' debts to be rescheduled to improve their living conditions.

Deputy Abdul Rahim Ekour referred to the country's foreign debts and criticised the government for planning to get more loans in order to pay part of the external debts and services on them.

Mr. Ekour cast doubt about the effectiveness of the economic restructuring programme agreed

with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). He said that the IMF had imposed this programme not for the sake of reforming the national economy, noting that many Third World countries following the advice of the IMF had fallen deeper in debt and are now facing deteriorating economic conditions.

Referring to unemployment, he said that it was regrettable to see a lack of equal opportunities for all people seeking jobs in the country. Appointment in government offices hinges on the whims and desires of the influential decision-makers who tend to favour their relatives and friends, he said.

Deputy Ahmad Dafawin urged the government to give more attention to agriculture. Many state-owned lands in the Karak region remain undeveloped while no move is being made to drill artesian wells in those regions to irrigate the land, he said.

The deputy urged the government to give attention to the Wadi Ben Hamad, Karak and Lejjoun regions in southern Jordan. Mr. Kafawin also made demands for improvements of the education, health and municipal services in the south.

Deputies from the Zarqa area presented a set of demands to the government calling for the establishment of sports facilities and demanding that municipalities and village councils be offered greater assistance.

They also demanded that a new garbage dump be found away

from the present one near Ruseifa to prevent pollution of the atmosphere and called on the government to impose stricter control over the various factories within the Zarqa region.

The deputies noted that poverty and unemployment were widespread in the Zarqa region and called on the government to increase social development services to needy families. These deputies named 10 villages and rural settlements which still lack electricity and demanded that health services be upgraded in their region.

Deputy Nader Dhuheirat called for solving problems facing areas in the Jordan Valley and urged it to convert several rural councils to municipal councils. He also called for setting up dams in areas exposed to floods in winter and for increasing the number of water pumps installed on the Wadi Al Arab Dam.

Mr. Dhuheirat also asked the government to increase the quota of the regions of Al Koura and the northern Jordan Valley in university seats and to augment the number of scholarships for the two regions.

Deputy Ahmad Al Kafahi asked the government to tackle the problems of unemployment, poverty, high prices and indebtedness and urged it to stabilise the Jordanian dinar's exchange rate and decrease foreign imports.

Dr. Kafahi, a Muslim Brotherhood member from Irbid, called

for carrying out the King Abdullah Hospital Project, expanding health centres, completing the agricultural roads network, developing the telephone services in addition to supporting municipal and rural councils in Irbid Governorate.

Deputy Nayer Al Hadid called for solving the basic problems plaguing Jordanian society such as unemployment and poverty, and for achieving balance between the society's various sectors and supporting the armed forces.

He stressed the importance of cooperation between the legislative and executive authorities and affirmed the need to support the executive authority to enable it to carry out plans and projects mentioned in its 1992 general budget and to help it overcome economic challenges and external pressures.

He criticised the increasing number of universities and institutes, whether public or private, and said these educational institutions were not established randomly. He said that such universities and institutes contributed only to increasing the number of the unemployed in Jordan.

Deputy Ibrahim Ghababshah called for listing the country's debts in an appendix added to the general budget draft law to facilitate the process of following it up. He requested the establishment of earth dams in the southern parts of Jordan and said that such dams are of strategic importance to Jordan.

UNRWA employees hold sit-in, demand pay increase

By Elia Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Committees representing some 6,000 employees of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in Jordan Monday staged a one-hour sit-in at the agency's headquarters in Amman and headed to the agency director a cable which they demanded be sent to UNRWA Commissioner General Iltis Turkmen in Vienna.

The sit-in and the cable were motivated by the workers' demand for better pay and as a manifestation of their dismay at the agency's decision to grant them a mere 4 to 12 per cent salary increase, considered far less than expected.

"We expected to get a reasonable increase in salaries in view of the soaring prices and the general economic situation, but we have been granted less increases than our colleagues in Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank and Gaza," said Ali Abdul Malik, who represents the teachers group.

"Between 1979 and 1991 UNRWA workers and teachers were offered two increases in salaries while those of other areas in UNRWA received several increases during the same period," he said in interview with the Jordan Times.

"UNRWA workers in Syria received some 40 per cent, those in Lebanon 25 per cent and the West Bank and the Gaza Strip 25 per cent," he said.

"In our cable to Mr. Turkmen, we expressed our dismay over this issue and demanded that our salaries be increased to at least the same level with those of our colleagues in other areas," he said.

Dennis Brown, the UNRWA director in Jordan, has been handed the cable to forward it to Vienna, Mr. Malik said. "We hope that our rightful demand will be met as soon as possible," he added.

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Dennis Brown, the UNRWA director in Jordan, has been handed the cable to forward it to Vienna, Mr. Malik said. "We hope that our rightful demand will be met as soon as possible," he added.

He said that the workers and

teachers could opt to take further action should their demands continue to be ignored, but he gave no details.

The last time UNRWA employees took action in demand for an increase in salaries was in 1989, after which the agency conducted a survey of living standards and gave the teachers an increase in pay.

Mr. Malik said that 30 committees gathered at the agency headquarters Monday, representing teachers, workers, and UNRWA headquarters officials.

"The cable and the sit-in were aimed at expressing our dismay at being treated unfairly and to call on the agency to reconsider its decision about the increase," said Mr. Malik.

He said that the workers hope that the agency will now respond favourably to their demand to avert further complications. He said the agency staff hope to get an increase that would help them cope with the soaring cost of living in the country.

Protestors staging hunger strike, sit-in against U.N. embargo on Iraq

By Nur Sati
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Two people who have been staging a hunger strike against the U.N. sanctions on Iraq have been admitted to a hospital, officials said.

The two, part of a group of 20 people who have been conducting sit-ins in front of the United Nations headquarters in Shmeisani, were admitted to the hospital Sunday, officials said. No further information on their condition was available.

The strikers, who are mostly Palestinians, Jordanians and Sudanese and are members of the Al Hussein Youth Club, said Sunday they will continue their hunger strike for another three days. In the meantime, they will continue their protests in front of the U.N. headquarters.

"We are going to walk to the U.S. embassy and hand them a leaflet," said Alawi Sheddhan, who has been taking part in the sit-ins for the past two weeks. "We just want to let the world hear our voices — that Iraqi

children are suffering and they are looking for peace."

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which has been conducting humanitarian relief programmes to Iraq since the Gulf war ended, has estimated that 87,000 children have died as a result of the embargo.

One of the protestors, a middle-aged man from Sudan, has shaved off his hair and refused to talk to people as a sign of solidarity with the children of Iraq, Mr. Sheddhan said.

"He is reflecting the silence of the Iraqi children," Mr. Sheddhan said. Although admitting that he does not expect much of a reaction from the U.S. embassy, Mr. Sheddhan said that he was hoping to draw attention to what is happening in Iraq.

"We are looking for a trial to change something which we consider was a dirty war," he said.

The leaflet, which will also be given to the Chinese, Russian and Egyptian embassies, criticises the United Nations

and the United States for their roles in enforcing the embargo.

Following are major excerpts from the leaflet: "U.S. President George Bush is associated with the most heinous outrages and merciless economic embargo against Iraq, the cradle of the world's most ancient civilisations."

"Just as what happened in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, when the United States dropped the first nuclear bombs on purely civilian targets, U.S. warplanes bombed the Amiriya civilian shelter in Baghdad to massacre in cold blood women, children and elderly people. The Amiriya crime was so brutal that it dwarfed Nazi crimes during the Second World War."

"The Amiriya crime has rendered invalid all talk by superpowers about human rights. All the tirades by the U.S. allies and those who supported U.N. resolutions to facilitate aggression against Iraq under the U.N. now amount to no more than political treachery," the leaflet said.

Russian ambassador pledges strong ties with Jordan

AMMAN (J.T.) — Official documents proclaiming the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States following the collapse of the Soviet Union were welcomed Monday by the Speaker of the Upper House of Parliament, Ahmad Al Lawzi, by Russian ambassador to Jordan Yuri Griadonov.

The ambassador, who represents Russia as well as the commonwealth in Jordan, expressed the country's keenness on pursuing the course of friendly relations and close cooperation between Jordan and the commonwealth at all levels.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said that Mr. Lawzi represented the Jordanian determination to pursue cooperation with the new commonwealth in the spirit of justice, freedom, peace, U.N. principles and resolutions. The speaker expressed Jordan's hope

of more Russian involvement in matters aimed at achieving a just and durable peace in the Middle East in implementation of the international legitimacy and U.N. Security Council resolutions.

Mr. Griadonov on Saturday met His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and assured him of the commonwealth's policies regarding the Middle East issue. He said that his country was keen on ensuring a lasting peace in the Middle East region and was going ahead with plans to host the multilateral talks in Moscow as planned.

Mr. Lawzi told the ambassador that the Upper House of Parliament was looking forward for further scopes of cooperation between the Russian and Jordanian parliaments in a manner that would contribute most beneficially towards promoting the cause of peace and serving the national



Ahmad Al Lawzi

interests of the Russian and Jordanian people.

The three-colour Russian flag was last Friday hoisted on the former Soviet embassy building in Amman and Mr. Griadonov said in a statement that Russia, which was taking over the former Soviet Union's seat at the United Nations, was also representing the commonwealth in Jordan.

Libyan official calls for Jordanian support against Lockerbie accusations

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Deputy Speaker of the Libyan National Assembly Ibrahim Al Ghunweil Tuesday ends a two-day visit to Jordan during which he sought the Kingdom's support for Tripoli's stand in the Lockerbie affair.

"I discussed with the Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Dr. Abdul Latif Arabiyat the open threats directed against two Libyan citizens on the part of Britain, the U.S. and other countries, noting that charges against the Libyans accused of being involved in the crash of the Pan Am jet over Lockerbie have not been substantiated," he said.

Mr. Ghunweil told the Jordan Times that Libya was counting on

Jordan's support and those of other friendly Arab countries in the face of all these accusations directed against Libyan citizens.

"Investigations in any country, including Libya, have not pointed an accusing finger at any of the Libyan citizens who were unjustly accused of being involved in this tragedy," Mr. Ghunweil said.

Last week, Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi invited the West to send judges to Tripoli to take part in investigations into the alleged implication of two Libyan citizens in the 1988 Pan Am crash.

The Libyan foreign minister had said that Libya was willing to send judges to Washington, London or Paris to discuss the charges.

Snow expected Wednesday

AMMAN (J.T.) — A white New Year is expected in Jordan with most hilly areas expected to be covered with snow Wednesday and Thursday as a new cold air mass will be affecting the country and the rest of the eastern Mediterranean region, according to the Department of Meteorology.

The Department director, Dr. Ali Abanda, told the Jordan News Agency, Petra, that the cold front will be accompanied by a very cold polar wind bringing in heavy rains which will start in the north, gradually extending to other areas of the Kingdom.

The very cold wind will cause snow to fall on hilly regions and the cold weather conditions will continue for three days, said Dr. Abanda. Department officials later told the Jordan Times that the snow was expected to fall on all areas above 750 metres. This means all regions in and around the capital, which is more than 800 metres above sea level, will probably receive snow.

Department officials said that some rain will fall Tuesday morning, but the activity will start in the afternoon when the intensity will increase and snow will start falling.

The officials said that temperatures are expected to drop to minus 1 Celsius and could rise to 5 Celsius during the day.

Agricultural Credit Corporation to open branch in Karak area

KARAK (Petra) — The Agricultural Credit Corporation (ACC) board of directors has decided to open a new branch for the corporation in the Ghor Al Safi area to provide services for farmers in the southern Jordan Valley region.

Karak Governor Eid Qataneh, who met with ACC Director General Mansour Ben Tarif Monday, stressed the importance of developing the southern Jordan Valley region and of holding small projects which could provide income to the families in the region.

He also lauded the ACC's role in supporting farmers and commended its cooperation with the agricultural sector in the Karak Governorate.

Mr. Ben Tarif said the corporation will commence construction work in the building of the Ghor Al Safi branch in January and that tenders for the project have

already been announced. He pointed out that the corporation is now working on training qualified staff to be employed at the branch.

The credit movement in Karak Governorate, Mr. Ben Tarif said, is very active. "It constitutes 20 per cent of the volume of credits in Jordan, which is estimated at about JD10 million," he said.

He affirmed that the corporation's recent decision to pay for part of the interest rates on some loans was commended by farmers who expressed their willingness to cooperate with it. He called on farmers to pay back their debts to enable the corporation to continue extending its services to the agricultural sector.

In another development, Mr. Ben Tarif Monday visited the new building which now houses the ACC offices in the Karak Governorate and inspected the work process in its various sections.

The plans of the corporation, he said, will concentrate on supporting agricultural processing and manufacturing projects, particularly cooperative ones, and marketing agricultural products in addition to providing loans to farmers to purchase agricultural machinery.

Fast mail service to be introduced in Irbid, Aqaba

AMMAN (Petra) — Fast delivery mail service will be introduced to the cities of Irbid and Aqaba for the first time by the beginning of January, Communications Minister Jamal Saraih said Monday.

He said that in view of the increasing demand of fast delivery mail in the two cities and as part of the ministry's plans to

extend the service to all parts of the Kingdom, the fast delivery mail services will be introduced in Irbid and Aqaba with the same conditions and rates as in Amman.

Any citizen, company or public or private establishment could call at the central mail offices in Irbid and Aqaba to benefit from the fast delivery mail service, Mr. Saraih said.

WHAT'S GOING ON

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Art and ornamentation exhibition by Sabah Hadidi at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Art exhibition by Jumana Al Hussein at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation Gallery — 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

RJ to introduce baby meal service

AMMAN (J.T.) — Royal Jordanian (RJ), the national airline, will introduce baby meal service on its aircraft along all routes starting Wednesday, according to an airline announcement Monday.

The announcement said that the meals will be prepared by the RJ catering units in Amman and offered along with sweets for the benefit of the young passengers of different classes.

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The View from Fourth Circle

God, Algeria, Arab rebirth and potato chips

THE stunning victory of the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS, its French acronym) in the first round of the Algerian parliamentary elections is a very important milestone for the region, perhaps the most important political development since the overthrow of the Shah of Iran in 1979. Like the demise of the Shah, the FIS victory sends three powerful messages:

1. It is a sign of massive grassroots disenchantment with the existing political, social, and economic order.
2. It serves notice to the incumbent Arab power structure that grassroots political organisation and human will can change or even remove long established systems, regardless of those systems' control of the means of violence, patronage, or the national budget.
3. The powerful appeal of Islam can and will be used to rally political sentiment across Arab frontiers artificially established by the British and French in the 1930s. It provides Arabs with an effective short term hope that the sense of identity and security that has not been satisfied to date either by Arab nationalism or secular statism may be achieved through other indigenous vehicles.

What happens next is anybody's guess. Mine is that FIS rule in Algeria cannot be stopped without tremendous bloodshed, and the government and army would be foolish to try to stop it. The FIS will take power, and its rule will result in two developments: a) It will gradually transform Algeria into a mildly "Islamic" state, with comforting emotional changes and superficial but highly symbolic acts that formally commit the state to Islamic dictates, but little substantive changes in the affairs of the state or the individual and b) In the end, it will simply confirm what has been clear for about the last, oh, three thousand years that states based on religion do not work, for religion is a spiritual compact with God and a moral code for man's daily life, not a manifesto for the political configuration of temporal and independent states.

The several contemporary models of states with strong or even formal religious foundations (Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Sudan, Israel, Lebanon) are lands of deep human sentiment and dignity, but hardly models of paradise on earth. While they all have their good points, and the three religions represented in their frenzied political arrangements (Islam, Judaism, and Christianity) share a parallel wellspring of moral rectitude, they are emphatic confirmation that religion as a basis for statehood is a failed experiment. Religion in the service of politics, however, is a powerful yet transitional occurrence. It is a means of change more than a means of policy-formulation, as valid for Middle Easterners today as it was for black South Africans in the 1980s and black Americans in the 1960s.

God is highly effective partner in protesting and challenging unjust political orders, as Iran, Algeria, and others have shown us. But He has yet to prove his competence in export promotion, job creation, budget balancing, water conservation, and the many other practical problems that have to be resolved by ruling governments.

Algeria will once again test these truisms, and it can use all the help it can get. For the Algerians are a good microcosm of everything wrong with the Arab World in recent decades —

centralised and autocratic government, intolerance for opposing political opinions, corruption and mismanagement, social confusion due to rapid consumerism, urbanism, and industrialisation, a distorted reliance on foreign imports of food and capital and consumer goods, massive foreign debt, rising unemployment, and a general deterioration in individual quality of life, sense of confidence, and future hope.

When we see all of these things happening in our part of the Arab World, in the Levantine states bordering Israel and Palestine, we tend to attribute much of the blame to the consequences of the militarism, waste, and distortions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Algeria, however, is far away from Palestine and the bitter anger of the Levant; yet it still suffers problems so massive and pervasive that its people have sought last resort refuge in the arms of God, and in the slogans and promises of those who claim to represent God in earthly political circles.

Clearly, Algeria is a confused and directionless land, an Arab/Islamic orphan suffering the consequences of inappropriate parentage at the hands of its French foster parents. Algeria is perhaps the most sad and glaring example of post-colonial Arab stupor. A land rich in resources, history, culture, and people. Algeria stumbles into the 1990s dazed and deeply in debt. Its people are angry and frightened. Their past and their language were taken from them by the French. Their present is an embarrassing mess resulting from over a quarter century of one-party rule. Their future is all they have left, and they do not want to lose that as well.

Desperate to salvage whatever they can of their national identity, the Algerian people turned to Islam the only force that could unite them, spur them on to great deeds of national self-assertion, and challenge the excesses and failures of the public political order. All of this started in the mid 1980s, peaking first in the 1988 street riots that forced the National Liberation Front to relinquish its monopoly on power and adopt a pluralistic political system. This electoral victory is the second peak for the Islamic opposition, and it is doubly significant because it happened despite fervent attempts by the government and the ruling power elite to discredit the Islamic movement, lock up its leaders, and influence the election results through blatant electoral redistricting that gave the government a better chance of victory.

Nevertheless, the government lost badly, because it had failed the crucial test of responding to the rights, needs, and aspirations of the Algerian people. The victory of the Islamic Salvation Front confirms that Islam remains the primary vehicle for political expression of massive grassroots discontent. It also indicates that the pause in Arab political transformation that accompanied the Gulf war is now over. The momentum for widespread political change in the region now resumes from the point it reached in mid 1990.

The West and much of the power elite in the Arab World are worried and frightened by the Islamic victory, and understandably so, for the FIS victory is indeed a major threat to the made-in-Europe and protected by America order that has ruled the Arab World for the last half a century. That order has seen something like two thousand billion dollars transferred from the Arab World to the West in the last 30 years, in the form of imports, investments, bank deposits, payment for goods and services, and, most recently, protection money and payments to

rent Western armies. But this order has not worked well from the viewpoint of the average Arab man or woman, and it is no surprise that the Arab people today should be demanding something different, and something better.

The Shah's overthrow in 1979 was an early sign that the Middle Eastern order had largely failed its people. The challenge to the Syrian government and Anwar Sadat's assassination two years later were other signs of something very wrong with the Arab/Islamic lands. Many other signs follow in the next decade, including the overthrow of Jafar Nu Sudan, Habib Bourguiba in Tunisia, and Mohammad Siad in Somalia, the ethnic and religious fragmentation of Lebanon, the continued Islamic challenge to the Egyptian regime, the demonstrations in Jordan in April 1989 that led to democratisation, the growing and increasingly successful grassroots pressures for political pluralism in Mauritania (Mauritania), the recent ethnic/political violence in Djibouti, the collapse of autocratic systems in Yemen, the collapse and bloody civil war of the Somali state, and, finally, when Kuwait was literally in 1991, the deafening silence throughout the Arab World.

Only two major political forces have not been tried in a manner in the Arab World in recent decades — democracy and Islam. The third important force of Arab nationalism can be manifested as a result of Islam or democracy's success, propelling the Arab people forward, far from their past and subjugation, beyond their recent torpor, and well away from their current stupor. The race is now on to see whether democracy or Islam captures the heart and imagination of the Arabs, or are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

In fact, they are probably symbiotic in character, each of the other support and strength. The Islamic groups are exerting influence and wielding power in several Arab countries (Yemen, Jordan, Algeria) thanks to their participation in democratic processes. Those who fear the Islamic wave should re-examine their fears, and accept it as an inevitable and ultimately constructive phase in the national transformation and rebirth of an Arab Nation that has been ailing, wandering, and floundering for many decades dazed by the money of oil, the glitter of Western video games, and the satisfying crunch of potato chips.

The premier task now facing the Arabs and Muslims of the region is to work out a new political model that is appropriate to our region, social legacy, and people. Such a model must accommodate Islam as our primary moral heritage and foundation, democracy as the key operative principle of our political and pluralism as the immutable foundation of our multi-ethnic, multi-religious Arab societies that include many non-Arabic non-Muslims. To fight the power of Islam and grassroots Muslim Eastern political sentiment is to fight a losing and unceasing battle, and also to engage in hypocritical fears — if we are so about respecting the will of the majority through plural democracy. After being told for many decades to shut up and enjoy their imported potato chips and videos, the Arab/Muslim people of our region are speaking out with force, and they are the language of change and renewal. Honest and intelligent women throughout the Arab World must now assure the continuing triumph of politicised Islam leads to fresh, vigorous and relevant Arab rebirth grounded in human dignity, freedom and identity. That, one suspects, is what God and all his prophets had in mind for us all along.

Secrecy is double-edged

EVERYONE IS still very secretive in this country. Yesterday evening, Dr. Abdul Salam Majali, Jordan's chief delegate to the Middle East peace talks, was lecturing at the World Affairs Council, presumably, on the development of the peace talks and the path they are expected to follow. The press was not invited and when we inquired if we could attend, we were told we were not allowed to be present at the lecture, which was open only to a selected few.

A reporter at this newspaper had been trying all week to get information on an alleged corruption case at a leading Jordanian institution, but to no avail. An Arabic daily last week published the text of what it said was a circular by one minister banning his staff from talking to the press except with prior permission from the minister himself.

These are only few examples of how our society still views the role of the press. Many of our esteemed politicians and officials seemingly have no respect for journalists' and newspapers' discretion and judgement much less their right to free access to newsworthy events or developments. Yet no chance is missed to criticise the press for not playing its intended role in democracy-building. The press cannot fulfill its function as a Fourth Estate unless all restrictions placed on it, except those deemed necessary by national security interests, are lifted. To be able to counter the Israeli media, for example, journalists need to know in-depth Jordan's position regarding the peace talks. Editors and chief-editors are responsible and wise people who are no less keen over the country's interest than their colleagues in the government or on peace missions. Keeping the press blind to important information such as the lecture delivered by Jordan's chief negotiator does not reciprocate the posture of responsibility that the press has tried to maintain. It is no longer viable or healthy to withhold information. People not only have the right to know, governments are obliged to make information available to anyone who seeks it. Secrecy encourages corruption because companies and individuals who keep their accounts secret can very easily evade tax. Likewise, officials who hide the information up their own sleeves could always be eyed with suspicion.

Despite all the restrictions, the press, in two years of the democratisation process, has so far shown a reasonable measure of restraint not less than that shown by government or Parliament.

Almost two hundred years ago, one great exponent of democracy and free speech said that if he would have been asked to choose between a government without a free press or a free press without government, he would have chosen the latter. It ought at last be realised that free press is a guarantee for a progressive government and a free society. For unless everyone knew his or her actions are public, one would very easily be tempted to use whatever power he or she possesses to his or her own self interest. The press is not a legislator, neither is it governor or judge. It merely is the means by which society exchanges information and conducts its debates. Unless the press is allowed to do just that, ours will be a deaf and mute society. Is this how our peers want us to be?

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

AL RA'I daily Monday praised the Financial Committee of the Lower House of Parliament for what it called an objective and in-depth evaluation of the 1992 draft budget and the economic reform plan attached to it as presented by the finance minister to the House. Perhaps it is one of very rare times that such positive and constructive response has been drawn from the Lower House which seems now to fully realise the crucial moments the country is facing and the government's sincere efforts to reform the national economy through the implementation of an economic restructuring programme, said the paper. The Finance Committee's report was comprehensive and reflected a high degree of awareness of the nation's problems and presented a clear insight into the serious challenges and difficult circumstances facing Jordan at the moment, commented the daily. It said that both the committee's report and the speeches of the various deputies demonstrated a high sense of responsibility and true commitment to share in the process of reforming the national economy. The speeches dwelt mainly on the questions of poverty, unemployment and the reform of the national economy, shedding more light on methods that could be followed to carry out the restructuring programme, the paper noted. It said that the Parliament session was more like a politico-economic symposium, focusing attention on the difficult economic and social questions now facing our nation.

A columnist in Al Ra'i daily said that Iran was not only Iraq's enemy, but that of the whole Arab Nation. Abdul Rahim Omar reviewed Tehran's position before, during and after the Gulf crisis, accusing the Iranian regime of stabbing the Arab Nation in the back. Statements given by the heads of the Tehran regime had given false hopes to the Arab countries which soon discovered the real role and intentions of their eastern neighbour, said the writer. In the Gulf war, Iran stood by the U.S.-led alliance, after the war ended, Tehran has been instrumental in creating disturbances inside Iraq, causing further sufferings to its people and later tightening the blockade imposed on Baghdad, the writer pointed out. He said that the Iranians still detain thousands of Iraqi prisoners of war, hold Iraqi civilian and military aircraft and continue to foment trouble among the Shiites in southern Iraq. The Iranians, who never fired a single shot against the Israeli occupiers of Palestine, staged an anti-American conference to abort the peace process, but at the same time were in secret negotiations with Washington over the fate of the hostages in Lebanon, the writer continued. The long-established Iranian alliance with Libya came to nought when the Western countries started issuing threats against Tripoli, said the columnist. Noting that Tehran is now turning its attention to Sudan, the writer said this move is clearly intended to stir trouble in neighbouring Egypt through the Islamic fundamentalist groups, with the hope of destabilising the Arab country.

By Maria Holt

ALL, on the surface, appears peaceful here. It is late autumn but still warm. The Sea of Galilee laps gently, blue and serene, yet humming with activity. On the other side of the lake the Golan rises, seemingly impervious to human machinations. Tiberias is not an unpleasant town to visit, well endowed with discos, beaches and waterfront restaurants. Nonetheless, intimations of precariousness persist.

I left Jerusalem on Friday morning on a bus going north. Belching forth air conditioning and incongruous muzak, the bus descended quickly into the stark austerity of the West Bank. The passengers were on assortment of Israelis going home for the weekend, a few settlers, the odd tourist and a great many soldiers. This military presence, both on and off duty, is something most visitors stop noticing after a day or two. But at first it is quite disquieting. The soldiers, uniformly young and ordinary, their machine guns propped carelessly against adjacent seats, are ready, one supposes, to spring into ac-

tion. For we are venturing, although it is easy to forget, into enemy territory.

By the time we reached Tiberias after an uneventful journey, the Sabbath was about to start and banks and shops were closing. But the town seemed to hint at uncomplicated pleasures, a break from the nagging reminders of occupation. Striving to approximate Limassol or the Costa del Sol, Tiberias cannot altogether lose its air of frantic escapism. Like them, it has perfected the art of tourism. Overpriced concrete monstrosities line the water front to cater for the anticipated throngs of visitors, most of whom seem to hail from Tel Aviv or the United States.

While Arab Nazareth, just down the road, suffers from a shocking degree of official neglect, Tiberias entices affluence by a systematic destruction of the past, a headlong rush away from authenticity. The contrast, if

one bothers to think about them at all, are disturbing, lurking uncomfortably on the fringes of Israel's consciousness; the occupied territories for example. Not very far away squats the Palestinian refugee camp of Balata, a squalid hellhole. But do these sad places, or indeed the many other unsavoury aspects of the occupier's lot, impinge on the hedonistic sun-seekers of Tiberias? Probably not.

At the beginning of 1948, Tiberias was home to around 5,000 Palestinians. Not one remained by the time Israel was established a few months later. In the centre of the town the old mosque still stands, solid and imposing, but abandoned now and sinking, with the blessing of the municipality, into decay. This, clearly, is a side of Tiberias best ignored, an uncomfortable memory of those who used to dwell here. These days, if seen at all, "the Arabs" are glimpsed at me-

nial tasks in restaurants and beach resorts. Such forced forgetfulness cannot help but breed insecurity.

On the public beach, a heap of rocks and rubble for which one need not pay the hefty entrance fee of more exclusive stretches of the lake shore, a group of young Ethiopian boys frolic in the water, using empty plastic bottles strapped to their bodies as swimming aids. There are many Ethiopians in Tiberias, people who "know nothing" neither the language nor the customs of Israel. Yet they are welcome, they are the future.

A country made up of newcomers, and still they pour in, like a plaster vainly struggling to stop a gushing wound. The wound is Palestine, penned in at Balata, at Shu'fat and Dahaysha, in the teeming alleys of Jerusalem's Old City. Meanwhile contented Israeli families enjoy a large and leisurely Sabbath brunch in the

luxury hotels of Tiberias. More contrasts, yet they seem able to coexist in a neat enough fashion, too neat maybe. Is this what it was all for, the bloodshed and the anguish?

Watching the tourist boats striking out across the Sea of Galilee, one could almost be by Lake Como, without a care in the world. But the Israelis, we know, have many cares, however determinedly they shunt them off and behave as if morality were not on their side. Raunchy music booms out everywhere, even from the boats chugging round the lake, to fairy lights at night, as if to drown the threatening silence.

There exists in Tiberias a deliberate, carefully cultivated theatricality that is almost convincing. The town occupies, after all, a spectacular natural setting. If one pretends hard enough it is very nearly possible to be beguiled. This scene of simple plea-

sure, however, is as dangerous as the Middle East.

Tiberias is a rough town, told. But not just Tiberias — whole country celebrates mess as a national characteristic. Violence hovers at the tins of society, ready to erupt at any moment. And does, in loud and aggressive exchanges which pass vitality, in fist fights and road accidents and, soon off in the distance, the blot of an entire people.

The not surprising effect of this is an incomplete picture of the occupied territories, which are capable of fulfilling only by relinquishing them. One day, its dream, its normality will come true. Many have said, Israel must be successful in ing all the land it wants, in very great danger, of its soul. — Middle East International, London.

Where life seems happy

Trees as protectors of the environment

The following article is reprinted from a United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation publication.

IT TAKES NATURE between 3,000 and 12,000 years to build up enough soil to form productive land. Erosion can destroy that work in a matter of hours. Worldwide, 3,200 million hectares are under threat from desertification and the livelihood of 700 million people is at risk.

Wind and water are the principal agents of this destruction. In extreme conditions, 150 tonnes of topsoil can be blown off one hectare of land in an hour. The lighter, finer particles of soil — which are also the most fertile — are carried away first. It was wind erosion that created the dust bowls in the Great Plains of the United States in the 1930s — one four-day storm carried away 300 million tonnes of soil.

Water erosion is the most common form of erosion; some studies suggest that as much as 25,000 million tonnes of soil are washed away each year. In India, for example, water erosion affects 90 million hectares — more than 30 per cent of the country.

Water erosion causes landslides and, by silting up rivers,

increases flooding and degrades drinking water. Deforestation in the Himalayas contributes to the annual flooding of 4.9 million hectares in India and the washing of 2,400 million tonnes of silt into the rivers of Bangladesh each year. Riverbeds in the Terai region of Nepal are rising by between 1.5 to 3 metres a decade. Siltation reduces the effectiveness of dams and hydro-electric systems. It has reduced the life expectancy of the Nizam Sagar reservoir in India to 6 per cent of its design capacity.

Productive land is also lost when its nutrient contents is depleted, or when it becomes too saline. If groundwater rises to within 1 metre of the surface, it can be drawn to the top and evaporate, leaving concentrations of salts which build up over time and pollute the soil. Waterlogging and salinisation have reduced yields from 11 million hectares of cropland in Pakistan.

The compacting of soil through the use of heavy machinery, or even the continued pounding by cattle, renders it too hard for water to penetrate or for plants to grow.

While all these chains of events occur naturally, human intervention has more than doubled the

natural rate of erosion and destroyed an estimated 2,000 million hectares of land.

Wind and water have a major impact when the soil is left exposed: when the protective cover of vegetation is lost. Human beings, through the misuse or overuse of the land, initiate this chain of destruction. Sustainable management, however, can reverse the cycle.

Trees can protect the soil and improve the quality of water supplies. They can be used as windbreaks to protect the land from wind erosion up to a distance of at least 20 times their height. Planting shelterbelts has led to increases in grain yields of up to 200 per cent.

In China, a new Great Wall is being built; a shelterbelt nearly 6,000 km long, covering 1.6 million hectares. It will form a protective barrier around the Gobi desert, designed to reduce erosion and reclaim lost land. In Morocco, windbreaks are helping to stabilise moving sand dunes, stopping them from encroaching on cultivated land.

Trees and vegetation reduce the effect of water erosion by softening the impact of rainfall, by stopping floodwater from sweeping over the land and by holding the soil together. This

binding effect is particularly important on sloping, slip-prone land. Landslides are seven times more frequent in such areas, following the removal of trees.

Forests bordering rivers and streams act as a buffer, catching sediment and filtering out chemicals and pesticides that pollute the water supply. They also lessen the damage from floods.

Because trees absorb more water than other plants, they often compete with crops, but their removal can cause rises in the water table that are equally detrimental.

Many trees restore nutrients to the soil that were removed by crops; by protecting humus they safeguard natural fertilizer supplies.

Trees protect the environment in other ways. Coastal wetlands and shallows, particularly estuaries and mangrove swamps, provide food and shelter for waterfowl, fish, crustaceans and molluscs. They are breeding grounds for shrimps. Mangrove forests protect the coastline from wave damage and tidal surges. The cost to U.S. marine fisheries of degradation in coastal wetlands is estimated at \$86 million a year. Using trees to protect the environment can reap real economic benefits.

LETTERS

Help Iraqi children

To the Editor:

ON Christmas Eve, while watching TV, I watched the American children getting presents in a very happy and warm atmosphere. Immediately I thought of my cousins Halo and Bana in Iraq. They are Iraqi Kurds living in Baghdad. They are allowed to play. Do you know why? Because if they fall down hurt themselves, there is no medicine for them in Iraq. Everytime my father travels to Baghdad, he takes copybooks, pencils and some food for them. Halo and Bana relatives like my father who always remember them with basic needs but what about other children who have no relatives outside Iraq?

On my birthday, I refused to accept presents and I asked friends to bring milk for Iraqi children instead. Your grandchildren and all children of the United States got everything, and I am sure you spent quite some time to settle on a splendid present to your grandchildren. Iraqi children are satisfied with a drop of milk.

I asked my parents if it is possible for my letter to be read by the president of the United States. The answer was: "We know." But in the name of children and innocent people every person in the United States in whose hands this happens to fall to try and send it to Mr. President George Bush and I'm waiting for an answer.

Lara Rashid
Sisters of Nazareth School
Sixth Grade
Jahil High School
Amman - Jordan

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name, preferably address as well. Names can be withheld, only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of manuscripts.

Handwritten signature: *Al-Ramzi*

Race hate catches fire in Europe

By Hugh O'Shaughnessy

THE future for them is sinister. "Sitting in her headmistress's office in a primary school in Perpignan watching her white, black and Arab pupils playing in the courtyard, Olga is frankly downhearted.

A vigorous woman of liberal views who, in cramped classrooms and on a small salary, has done her best for race relations in her city, she is certainly no defeatist. But she has no illusions about the future course of politics and community life in this depressed corner of France in the shadow of the Pyrenees.

The tide immigrants across the Mediterranean from Muslim North Africa is inexorable; the local French reaction is getting tougher month by month; the National Front of Jean-Marie Le Pen, which wants immigrants out, already commands the loyalty of a third of the voters of Perpignan and is bound to get stronger.

Politics in Perpignan, as in other European cities great and small from Bremen to Brindisi, are swinging to the right because of immigration.

Overly racist parties such as the National Front and the Republicans in Germany are having a field day. Moderate conservatives are scrambling after their voters, terrified lest the extremists who way any more of that middle class on whom the moderate right has always depended.

The left, supposedly committed to greater internationalism than the right, has the hard job of seeking policies which are at the same time saleable and humane. Fearful lest turmoil in the East push millions of Slavs and Eastern Europeans to seek peace and prosperity in the West and alarmed at the prospect of new waves of immigration from the Maghreb and the whole southern shore of the Mediterranean — and from Africa beyond — politicians are being forced to get to grips with a set of problems which, all are agreed, can only get worse.

As an increasingly depressed Third World stirs and begins to move, immigration will throw its shadow over public life in Europe. The drive of migrants towards the rich countries of Western Europe, strongly influenced as it is by the global contrast in standards of living between the poor South and the rich North, could produce as many problems for Europe in the years to come as the cold war ever did. Perhaps, more.

At an international conference in Rome sometime ago the Vatican talked of "hundreds of millions of people on the move." In the frightened, violent port of Marseilles, where North Africans are in the vast majority in many districts, Le Meridionale, the local daily, has recalled the words of Houari Boumediene, the Algerian nationalist leader; "No atomic bomb will stop our peoples one day invading the rich spaces of the northern hemisphere."

The impact of the migration issue goes through infinite gradations in Europe from city to city and village to village depending on whether immigrants are black or white, Christian or Muslim; on whether the local economy is booming or struggling; on whether local politicians are skillful or clever; or on whether, as in Germany, the roots of a racist ideology are still alive. With up to 10 million non-EC immigrants settled among the 320 million inhabitants of the Community and tens of millions more trying to crowd in, it is rare for any part of Europe to be completely unaffected. Europe, after all, needs workers as birth rates slump; only in Ireland is the birth rate increasing.

In Germany, in recent weeks, hatred of immigrants has boiled up in public and demonstrated that democratic and united Germany can still produce ugliness that smells of the Nazi era. The extreme right commands enormous electoral funds. Police reaction against racial extremists in Germany has often been halting — perhaps because, as opinion polls show, the police sympathise with them.

Günther Schulze, a sociologist of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, says: "Discrimination against foreigners is now routine, blood is again flowing from German nationalism." In Belgium, the Vlaams Blok in Flanders and the National Front in Wallonia — which advocate compulsory repatriation of immigrants — are expected to make big gains in the

general elections. Nor is progressive Scandinavia an exception. The Progress Party of Denmark, whose leader Mogens Oistrup won a fifth of the electorate by campaigning against taxation, owed part of its success to an appeal to xenophobia. And this summer there have been demonstrations outside Copenhagen against immigration.

Perpignan, a stronghold of French nationalism, is a place of narrow streets, ancient buildings and pleasant squares which dozes in the sun, half remembering the times long past when it belonged to Spain. It is a city of some cultural pretensions: it has a university and it wants to become known for its annual festival for news photographers. But below the quiet surface, Perpignan is a political snafu. "Perpignan is hardly any better than Marseilles, just more hypocritical," says Marguerite, a teacher.

Votes have traditionally been bought and sold in Perpignan, with the thriving gypsy community among the most active traders. The city boss, Jacques Farran, is under investigation for corrupt practices. "Under all the different political labels we've had the same gang in power here in Perpignan for 50 years. It's disgusting," says Marguerite. After France was forced out of its Algerian colony three decades ago, the city welcomed a large number of "pieds noirs," white colonists who were forced off the land they cultivated and out of their country of adoption by the victorious Algerian nationalists.

"The pieds noirs are a big political force here," says Claude Bébon, an independent-minded member of the regional assembly and a rather insubordinate member of the Socialist Party. He talks wistfully. "When those men worked the land in Algeria they were often communists or good socialists," he says. "Now they're far to the right."

The Maghrebins — the Algerians and their Moroccan and Tunisian cousins — who got rid of French colonialism in the 1950s, are meanwhile following the French into their own country, as Boumediene forecast. The political temperature is rising in the city.

At 7 a.m., in the scruffy Place Casanoves, not far from the old palace of the Kings of Majorca, the scene is reminiscent of the New Testament. The Maghrebins stand, each with his lunch in a plastic carrier bag, waiting to be hired for a day's work in the fields, in the vineyards or on the building sites. In this depressed city they often wait in vain. By eight o'clock the Place is filled with rickety tables and wobbly camp beds where stallholders heap the cheap shirts and second-hand skirts that the North African men and women buy. No one can guarantee that drugs are not traded among all the tatty clothing.

The increasing number of Muslims and the competition for work is day by day pushing the whites into the arms of Le Pen — and not just in Perpignan, says Bébon. Pointing to the recent remarks by former President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing about a migrant "invasion," Mr. Bébon emphasises how the respectable right throughout France is being drawn into deep controversy on the issue. "By choosing the word 'invasion,' a very painful word for the French, Mr. Giscard — who is no fool — was consciously equating immigrants with barbarians," he says. Mr. Giscard's words brought him an immediate dividend: a poll last week showed him to be the politician with whom the French identify.

Meanwhile, the increasingly fearful Muslims of Perpignan are doing their own mobilising and Islamic fundamentalism is gaining a foothold. In the immigrant quarter of St. Jacques, fundamentalists have threatened to punish Algerian grocers if they contradict the Koran and sell alcohol.

At the town hall, Philippe Laborie, spokesman for a council which survives in office with the support of the National Front, admits race relations are "a thorny subject." Here in Perpignan we are much nearer to Africa than you English, but," he smirks, "you English are much nearer Asia. All those Pakistanis you've got..."

As photographer Roger Hutchings and I leave, we are shown how thorny immigration is. Nervous CRS riot police, heedless of the city's drive to attract news photographers, force Hutchings to expose and destroy film he had

taken of checks on immigrants at the railway station.

Italy, which despite its Fascist past has never rivalled Germany in xenophobia, is now waking up to the reality of racism. Accustomed — like Spain, Portugal and Greece — to sending surplus population abroad rather than welcoming incomers, Italians are struggling with a new political phenomenon. Racism has found some strange bedfellows. In an outburst last year, Mgr. Ersilio Tonnini, the Archbishop of Ravenna, complained that Europe was being Islamised and that peoples of different cultures, religions and races could not live together.

Milan the glittering capital of Lombardy, has been the focus of an increasingly bitter debate. It has seen the rise of the Lega Nord, a movement that embodies the Lombards' ancient distrust of Italians from less productive parts of the country. Playing to the Lombards' convictions that the hopelessly corrupt government in Rome does nothing but squander the hard-earned money seized in taxes from the industrious north-easters and that all Italians living south of Rome are congenitally sick, lame and lazy, the Lega Nord wants an independent Lombardy with its capital in Mantua.

But the Lega, which is less of a traditional party than a mass movement without a set of carefully worked out policies, is also tapping Lombards' fears of the foreign immigrant. A poll last month in the newspaper, "Il Giornale," showed that half the voters considered the Lega racist and two-thirds believed that in the spring elections it would win more than a quarter of the votes cast. One Lombard in two finds the Lega leader Umberto Bossi "well-informed, honest, cultured and friendly." "The Lega will certainly be gaining ground," says a senior diplomat in Milan.

Italy is the European country that is most directly accessible to migrants from the Slavic East and the African South. With a land frontier with Yugoslavia and with tens of thousands of ethnic Italians living along the Dalmatian coast, the Italian government is this weekend bracing itself for a new influx of refugees from the Yugoslav civil war. And with the longest coastline in the Mediterranean it has no chance of keeping out migrants from the south.

"We can never really seal our

frontiers," says Enzo, a social worker in Florence. Under its energetic socialist mayor, Giorgio Morales, that city is doing what it can for racial harmony. The Florentines, who pride themselves on their culture and humanity — and who don't want to lose their fabulously valuable tourist business — got a terrible fright last year.

Shopkeepers had long complained about street traders from overseas — extra-communitari from outside the EC — and Florentines in general had been worried about immigrants trading in drugs. During carnival, masked revellers beat three migrants nearly to death. Then black Africans went on hunger strike outside the cathedral. The headlines went round the world and something urgent had to be done. Sitting in his magnificent office in the Palazzo Vecchio last week Mr. Morales explained his policy. "It's one of solidarity with the immigrant — combined with enforcement of the law." The extra-communitari traders have been cleared from outside the elegant shop windows and given pitches in other spots where they can catch the tourist's eye. The city has meanwhile laid on Italian classes for immigrants and set up centres where new arrivals can stay for up to 60 days.

Mr. Morales is paying voluntary aid agencies to set up creches and nurseries so that disadvantaged Italian and immigrant children can be cared for together. "But," says Mr. Morales, "there's a limit on what one city can do. Migration is a national question. Perhaps even a supranational one."

Among all the fears about the future, there is still a feeling that violent racism is not inevitable in Europe. There is still hope that with good will and realism, extremists of all persuasions can be held in check. Rino Perbellini, the archbishop of Florence's expert on migrant affairs, is clear. "There is no way immigrants can be totally excluded. There's no substitute for treating them like the human beings they are."

In the heart of the continent, the country with the highest immigration rate of all in Europe sets an intriguing example. In the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, three out of 10 of the tiny population are migrants, but racism is scarcely a problem. Tolerance has prevailed somewhere. — Observer.

U.S.-Japan trade frictions rise ahead of Bush Tokyo visit

By Robert Trautman Reuter

WASHINGTON — Already-sour U.S.-Japan trade relations have been hit by new setbacks just before President George Bush's visit to Tokyo in the new year.

When Mr. Bush's Dec. 30-Jan. 10 visit to Japan, Singapore, Australia and South Korea was first mentioned, he suggested it would be used for renewing geo-political ties in a post-cold war climate. BUT NOW U.S. officials say it could instead trigger trade clashes as Mr. Bush shifts the talks onto ways to create more job opportunities for Americans.

Referring to the countries on his trip he told a Thursday press conference: "I think they'll understand when this trip is over to the degree there are barriers that make this trade less than fair, that they better to something about it."

With election-year politics prominent, three merging themes of the last few months triggered the switch in tactics.

The first was an intensifying spotlight on the rising U.S. trade deficit in cars and car parts when General Motors announced last week it would close 21 North American plants, shedding 74,000 workers.

The second was soaring current account surplus in Tokyo's favour and the third Japan's refusal to open its rice market to foreign imports.

Already Mr. Bush has warned Japan about rising protectionism in America, saying in a pre-visit letter to Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa he opposes restrictions on Japanese imports but adding: "I need your help."

In his news conference, Mr. Bush made plain his view: "I'm not going to turn protectionism. I just believe that we need to expand markets, not contract them," he said.

"This country went through a disastrous experience with protectionism years ago and we're not going to do it again. We must not go back to this isolationist sphere that inevitably will shrink markets and throw more people out of work."

But Mr. Bush's opposition has not stopped House Democratic leader Richard Gephardt of Missouri and four Michigan congressmen — from states which are home to major car plants — unveiling plans to submit legislation to force Japan into balancing trade with the United States within five years or face sanctions on its car and car-parts shipments.

With U.S. trade deficit with Japan at about \$40 billion, 75 per cent of its cars and car-parts, the

anti-Japan trade legislation is certain to become a major issue Democrats will use to batter Republicans in the 1992 congressional and presidential elections.

On Thursday, Japan's Finance Ministry announced a more than three-fold increase in its current account balance of payments surplus, the broadest measure of trade in goods and services, which widened to a \$7.26 billion surplus in November from a 1.69 billion surplus in November last year.

Alongside general complaints about numbers, Mr. Bush is bound to raise in Tokyo Japan's specific decision to maintain its ban on imports of foreign rice in the face of demands for change from United States and other industrial countries.

Trading partners want Japan to drop the ban as part of efforts to

reform the global trading system, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Its refusal could contribute to a breakdown of work on reforms to the world trading rules after five years.

Diplomatic sources say Mr. Bush is likely to be met in Tokyo with assurances that its latest efforts to balance bilateral trade will work in time for example, decisions by the Japanese automakers Toyota, Nissan and Honda to increase the value of car parts they buy from U.S. suppliers.

But Japan made similar assurances in the past, and many U.S. businessmen and politicians see only minimal results, some suggesting informal barriers operated by private businesses in Japan are now the main obstacle.

Perceived problems with Japanese business practices have been discussed over the last two years by a Japan-U.S. group known as the Structural Impediments Initiative (SII).

"But the business community is left with the impression that a lot of the momentum is gone from the SII talks," said one trade analyst.

Mr. Bush's visit is likely to give them new impetus.

"I think the major problem is to have the people that run the business enterprises in the various countries we're going to understand how difficult things are for the American worker... and how important it is to gain access — further access — to these foreign markets," Mr. Bush told reporters.

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Financial Markets

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U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close	Tokyo Midday
Sterling Pound	1.6742	1.6675
Deutsche Mark	1.5158	1.5210
Swiss Franc	1.3515	1.3541
French Franc	5.1905	5.1815
Japanese Yen	105.90	105.75
European Currency Unit	1.3345	1.3360

European Currency Unit

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Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	4.18	4.17	4.17	4.06
Sterling Pound	10.51	10.55	10.55	10.51
Deutsche Mark	9.50	9.50	9.50	9.43
Swiss Franc	7.57	7.57	7.57	7.57
French Franc	10.51	10.51	10.51	10.12
Japanese Yen	5.66	5.66	5.43	5.25
European Currency Unit	10.50	10.50	10.50	10.19

Gold

Unit	USD/Oz	JD/Gm	Unit	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	353.50	6.80	Silver	3.57	0.055

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin

Date: 30/12/1991

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6740	0.6760
Sterling Pound	1.2554	1.2647
Deutsche Mark	0.4426	0.4445
Swiss Franc	0.4973	0.4995
French Franc	0.1296	0.1302
Japanese Yen	0.5551	0.5576
Dutch Guilder	0.3925	0.3945
Swedish Krona	0.1211	0.1217
Italian Lira	0.0564	0.0567
Belgian Franc	0.02150	0.02161

Other Currencies

Date: 30/12/1991

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.7590	1.7620
Lebanese Lira	0.0766	0.0770
Saudi Riyal	0.1794	0.1800
Kuwaiti Dinar	—	—
Qatari Riyal	0.1826	0.1835
Egyptian Pound	0.2000	0.2100
Omani Riyal	1.7250	1.7300
UAE Dirham	0.1826	0.1835
Greek Drachma	0.3725	0.3745
Cypriot Pound	1.5310	1.5425

CAS Indices for Amman Financial Market

Index	28/12/1991 Close	29/12/1991 Close
All-Share	129.54	129.72
Banking Sector	106.72	106.82
Insurance Sector	129.45	129.29
Industry Sector	163.23	163.47
Services Sector	143.69	144.47

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Monday.

One Sterling	1.8735/45	U.S. dollar	1.5188/93
One U.S. dollar	1.5170/80	Canadian dollar	1.7090/7100
	1.3505/15	Deutsche marks	31.23/28
	5.1780/1880	Dutch guilders	1148/1149
	125.80/90	Swiss francs	5.440/5540
	5.9750/9850	Belgian francs	5.9050/9150
	5.9050/9150	French francs	—
One ounce of gold	353.20/353.70	Italian lire	—
		Japanese yen	—
		Swedish crowns	—
		Norwegian crowns	—
		Danish crowns	—
		U.S. dollars	—

Banks catch Bond after 6-day chase

SYDNEY (R) — Failed tycoon Alan Bond, once called Australia's corporate showman, was unable Monday to escape being served with a bankruptcy notice.

After a six-day chase, agents acting for a group of banks caught Mr. Bond at Sydney's Kingsford-Smith Airport to serve him with the 251 million dollar (\$190 million) notice.

Solicitor Hamish Young, acting for a group of banks led by the Hongkongbank of Australia Ltd., told reporters the notice was served after Mr. Bond arrived on an early-morning flight from Bali. It requires Mr. Bond to pay the amount within 28 days.

Mr. Bond said "thank you," folded the notice and put it in his pocket. Mr. Young added.

The notice was the second Mr. Bond has received from the same group of banks over a personal guarantee he gave on a loan to his family company, Dalhousie Investments Pty Ltd.

Mr. Bond sued the banks in September saying the bankruptcy notice was invalid, but lost the case.

A few days later the former tycoon was chased by a court official in a car after leaving home and was finally handed the notice in a Perth parking lot.

But the notice was later deemed invalid on technical grounds, and a fresh notice — which the banks say removes the technicality — was issued before Christmas. Process servers spent the Christmas holidays stalking Mr. Bond's house, to no avail.

Mr. Bond has said in statements rendered to the courts that he had a deficiency of assets over liabilities of about 40 million dol-

lars (\$30 million).

Once among the cream of Australia's entrepreneurs, Mr. Bond built up his Bond Corp Holdings Ltd. into a 10 billion dollar (\$7.6 billion) brewing, media, resources and real estate empire in the 1980s.

At his peak, he paid 49 million dollars (\$37 million) for the Van Gogh painting "Irises," was made Australian of the year, and became the first successful foreigner in 132 years to wrest the America's Cup yachting trophy from the United States.

But after racking up huge debts and reporting one of the country's biggest corporate losses Mr. Bond resigned in September 1990 as Bond Corp. chairman, leaving the company restructuring itself to stage off liquidation.

In Perth, Mr. Bond's solicitor Stephen Paterniti said he would seek a stay of the judgment handed down in September by making an application to the New South Wales Court of Appeal.

Mr. Paterniti said even if the stay application failed, Mr. Bond would seek special leave to appeal to the High Court, Australia's highest court, against the original judgment.

"If successful it would mean his obligation to pay is completely expunged," he said.

An application to the High Court might not be made for several months, depending on the court's Sydney sittings, Mr. Paterniti said.

He said if the stay application failed and the 28-day period for payment expired, the banks would still have to start bankruptcy proceedings against Mr. Bond in the Federal Court.

UAE shares end year on high note

ABU DHABI (R) — Share prices in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) ended 1991 on a high note, up 26.1 per cent on their value a year ago, the National Bank of Abu Dhabi said.

The bank, which has its own share index in the absence of an official stock exchange, said the index closed at 1,506.6 on Dec. 30, compared with 1,119.9 on Dec. 30, 1990.

It said the unofficial market recovered significantly from March, shortly after the end of the Gulf war.

The bank, whose index mea-

sures 22 major UAE stocks, said it did not have a figure for the total volume of shares traded.

It said only one public company was floated in 1991.

The crisis at the Bank of Credit and Commerce International (BCCI), a major force in the UAE economy, kept investors away in the second half of the year.

But the report said investor confidence had returned gradually in November and December with the expectation that company results would be better than expected in 1991.

WORLD STOCK MARKETS

SYDNEY — TOKYO — Stocks soared after the Bank of Japan cut the official discount rate by one half of a percentage point to 4.5 per cent. The Nikkei average rose briefly above the 23,000 mark on the last day of 1991 trading before closing 546.45 points up at 22,983.77.

PARIS — Share prices finished higher in slender holiday trade, with last minute purchases for end-of-year accounts pushing up prices. The CAC-40 Index closed 21.21 points or 1.23 per cent higher at 1,741.86.

LONDON — Sharp gains for drug shares and a stronger New York market took the FTSE 100 index to a marginally higher close with sentiment kept in check by sterling worries. The index ended 1.3 points up at 2,420.

NEW YORK — Blue chips surged to fresh session highs in the early afternoon, continuing last week's record rise. At 1742 GMT, the Dow was up 33.32 at 3,134.84.

HONG KONG — The market rose on the back of rallies in Tokyo and New York. The Hang Seng Index closed 39.00 points higher at 4,275.20.

SINGAPORE — Share prices closed higher for the fifth consecutive session. The Blue-chip Straits Times Industrial index finished 9.11 points up at 1,476.98.

BOMBAY — The market was closed from Dec. 25 to 31 for the Christmas holiday. The BSE index finished last Tuesday at 1,908.85, down 6.27 points.

Britain resists devaluation of sterling

LONDON (R) — Britain's conservative government Monday resisted pressure to devalue the pound sterling or to raise interest rates despite new signs of economic stagnation in the run-up to a general election which must be held next year.

Reports of record business failures in the past 12 months coupled with forecasts of higher unemployment and continued gloom in the housing market prompted calls for action from leading businessmen and worried Conservative politicians.

Treasury Minister John Major said the government was committed to keeping the pound within its bands in the European Community's exchange rate mechanism (ERM) of currency management, adding that there was little it could do to improve the economy in the short term.

"Any levers of economic policy you pull have a lead time of a few months so I don't think there's much which one can do which has a short-term effect. We feel that we have put the right elements in place," Mr. Major said in a radio interview.

A slow recovery was under way, he added.

Although the pound drifted down against the German mark and approached its lower ERM limit in thin trading, Mr. Major said: "It looks as though we might well be able to sustain the pound at its present level and with present interest rates."

But he added that Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont might resort to a politically damaging interest rate rise should that be needed. "If... it is necessary to raise interest rates, he's made it clear he'll do so," Mr. Major said.

Newspaper were filled with bad news for the government, which is depending heavily on its traditional image as a responsible economic manager to fight off a challenge from a resurgent opposition Labour Party in an election widely expected in April or May.

With Labour entering 1992 six points ahead in the latest opinion poll, party leader Neil Kinnock claimed in his new year message that the recession had "shrivelled the economy and crushed confidence."

Dun and Bradstreet, a business information agency, found that businesses were failing at a rate of 130 a day.

Rent rises would be "slight," it said.

However, one Beijing resident said he had already been told his rent would double from three yuan (56 U.S. cents) a month to six yuan about (\$1).

The television gave no details of the new system. It said new houses would have rents on a different scale from old houses, and homes would be available for sale.

Massive subsidies for housing and food are helping to cripple China's budget, which this year will have a deficit several billion yuan above the target of 12.3 billion yuan (\$2.27 billion), the chief cabinet spokesman told a news conference Monday.

Peking's chief spokesman said Monday that spurred by reform and political stability, China's economy posted a banner year in 1991 — in happy contrast to depression and political chaos sweeping other parts of the world.

State Council (cabinet) spokesman Yuan Mu painted a rosy picture of record production, overfulfilled growth targets, stable prices and low inflation, and said 1992 would be even better.

Japan's central bank cuts key lending rate to 4.5%

TOKYO (AP) — Japan's central bank cut its official discount rate Monday from five per cent to 4.5 per cent — its third reduction in six months to bolster a sagging economy.

Many analysts linked the central bank's move to next week's visit by U.S. President Bush, who is expected to seek action from Tokyo to reduce the huge trade surplus with the United States. Some Japanese officials have called for easier credit as a way to increase domestic demand for imports.

"There might have been strong political pressure on the central bank to lower its key lending rate before President Bush's visit... because no specific pump-priming measures have emerged yet from the cabinet of (Prime Minister Kiichi) Miyazawa," said Susumu Nozaki, an economist with Tokai Bank.

The central bank "moved quickly now to avoid the impression of having yielded to foreign pressure," said Yukio Takahashi, an analyst at Wako Securities.

But at a press conference Monday morning, Bank of Japan

Governor Yasushi Mieno denied that the bank's action was connected to the visit.

The key lending rate is what the Bank of Japan charges on loans to commercial banks. The bank also cut the discount rate by half a percentage point July 1 and Nov. 14.

"With the latest reduction there will be a substantial impact on corporate investment, which has cooled recently," said Mr. Nozaki.

Stocks rose strongly on the announcement.

The rate cut at first strengthened the dollar, which had plunged against the Japanese yen since the U.S. discount rate was cut by one percentage point earlier this month.

But by late morning the dollar was trading around the level of Friday's close on expectations that the United States would follow suit and further cut interest rates.

The central bank's rate cut is intended to spur Japan's economic growth, which has been sluggish recently.

Some analysts predict growth

next year will only be 2.2 per cent to 2.5 per cent, down from 2.5 to 3.8 per cent for 1991. A Bank of Japan survey in a month showed that major manufacturers have revised their forecasts for pretax profits for the year ending March 31 sharply downward.

"It is the judgment of the bank that this action will provide sufficient monetary conditions for achieving more balanced non-inflationary growth," the central bank said in a statement.

Bearish sentiment is spreading among investors as growth decelerates," said Trade Minister Kozo Watanabe. "In such circumstances, we believe this measure is timely."

The finance ministry, which included a \$5.62 billion tax increase in the fiscal 1992 budget recently approved by the cabinet because of declining tax receipts, welcomed the move.

"This cut in the discount rate will have a desirable impact on the facets of the economy," Finance Minister Tsutomu Hata said in a statement.

"We enjoy political stability and this provides a very important precondition and guarantee for the stable development of our economy," he told a news conference.

"This contrasts sharply with the slow growth of the world economy and the instability and turbulence in some other countries and regions," he said.

Mr. Yuan said Beijing's decision to promote economic reform while suppressing political dissent after the failed pro-democracy protests of 1989 had helped China to set its economy on a course of "normal development."

"From 1989 to 1991, we have basically achieved our targets of economic reform," he said, adding that the official austere programme set in place in late 1988 to curb massive inflation had achieved its goal.

Mr. Yuan said China's gross national product (GNP) growth in 1991 would hit seven per cent far outstripping the cautious 4 per cent estimate state planners set at the beginning of the year.

Industrial production from enterprises outside of rural areas would grow by 13.2 per cent more than double the early estimate of six per cent, he said.

Mr. Yuan glossed over critical problems plaguing the mammoth and unproductive state sector which has been sucking up billions of dollars in state subsidies.

China's chief spokesman said Monday that spurred by reform and political stability, China's economy posted a banner year in 1991 — in happy contrast to depression and political chaos sweeping other parts of the world.

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China's rents rise tomorrow in housing reform move

BEIJING (R) — China's leaders, battling a crippling budget deficit, will raise rents in Beijing and several other areas next year to push forward housing reform, state television said Monday.

The new system will go into effect Jan. 1 for residents of Beijing, the port city of Tianjin and the central province of Shaanxi, the television said.

Rent rises would be "slight," it said.

However, one Beijing resident said he had already been told his rent would double from three yuan (56 U.S. cents) a month to six yuan about (\$1).

The television gave no details of the new system. It said new houses would have rents on a different scale from old houses, and homes would be available for sale.

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New commonwealth moves hesitantly into 1st major trial

MINSK, Byelorussia (R) — The Commonwealth of Independent States, frail successor to the old Soviet Union, faced its first trial Monday when leaders met to discuss disputes on economic and military policy.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin flew into the Byelorussian capital Minsk, insisting the new 11-nation coalition was strong.

Asked what issues threatened its future, Mr. Yeltsin, pivotal figure in the commonwealth, replied brusquely: "Nothing and no one."

Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk, who has the power to make or break the community, appeared more sceptical. "We must wait and see what kind of commonwealth it is and only then talk about signing any joint charter," he told Interfax News Agency.

The commonwealth was formally founded nine days ago after the final collapse of the 69-year-old Soviet state. The move marked the end of President Mikhail Gorbachev's rule but held out hopes that the some form of alliance between Russia and Ukraine could be salvaged.

That alliance now appears increasingly in question.

A spokesman for Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev said the republics, having thrown off the control of the centralised

Soviet state, were wary of any Russian domination.

"Russia must not be our big brother," he said. "But there is no way around a single economy."

Ukrainian President Kravchuk shook two of the commonwealth's central pillars before Monday's meeting started.

On economic and defence policy, both of crucial importance to the international community, he appeared at loggerheads with his powerful Russian counterpart and other republics.

Mr. Kravchuk told reporters the idea of a common rouble currency, agreed earlier by Commonwealth republics, now appeared to be a "fiction."

Ukraine, he said, would take measures to protect its economy when Russia freed prices to market levels on Jan. 2 — a day that may strain the fibre of the new community as well as arousing tensions within Russia itself.

He said Ukraine, with its powerful industrial and agricultural base, would not join Russia in radical price reforms Thursday.

"We move to a market by a somewhat different path," he said. Ukrainian price reforms were expected on Jan. 10.

The liberalisation of prices on Jan. 2 could exert great strains on the Ukrainian economy. Higher

prices in Russia could move many Russians to buy up goods in Ukrainian shops. It would also tempt Ukrainian farmers to evade border controls and sell their produce on the territory of the neighbouring republic.

Ukraine is moving to introduce special coupons as a form of partial replacement currency to protect its stocks at a time when shortages are dogging the entire former Soviet Union.

Ukraine and Russia also disagree over the future of the armed forces that had served the Soviet state.

"All non-strategic forces in the Black Sea Fleet should belong to Ukraine," Mr. Kravchuk said before the meeting.

Mr. Yeltsin, who moved into Gorbachev's Kremlin office four days ago, refuses to accept this. "Historically, the Black Sea Fleet was always Russian. But probably Ukraine has some right to lay claim to some part of it," he said.

The Black Sea Fleet, a vital arm of what was once the Soviet Navy, is based in the Ukrainian port of Sevastopol.

Mr. Yeltsin suggested the Soviet Armed Forces should be reformed into commonwealth forces over a transitional period of about three years.

The Russian president insists the commonwealth should retain

a united system of armed forces. But Ukraine plans its own army and agrees to co-operation only over strategic weapons based on its territory.

While accepting that Mr. Yeltsin should have central control over the nuclear arms based in four republics, Mr. Kravchuk is demanding more clearly defined veto rights over their use.

The talks appeared to make little progress in the initial two-hour spell set aside to cover a 10-point agenda ranging from finance to economic reform and military matters.

Leaders agreed only on the first agenda point — the creation of co-ordinating bodies — before adjourning for a half-hour break. Talks then resumed.

The leaders were also expected to discuss a bloody conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh, a largely Armenian enclave situation within Azerbaijan and ruled from the Azerbaidzhan capital, Baku.

TASS News Agency said an Azerbaijan tank column had taken up position on the edge of the territory's capital, Stepanakert, during the night and was shelling the city.

It said people had been killed in the shelling, but gave no figures.

'Georgian rebels to storm parliament'

TBILISI, Georgia (R) — A senior Georgian rebel commander said Monday his forces were preparing to storm the Transcaucasian republic's parliament where President Zviad Gamsakhurdia has been under siege for more than a week.

Fighting raged along Rustaveli Avenue, the main thoroughfare in the capital, Tbilisi, through the morning.

But it was not clear whether rebel National Guards, backed by the shadowy Mkhedroni (horsemen) opposition group, had the power to force their way into the fortified complex.

Rebel guard Major Gela Lanchava told Reuters opposition forces had launched a successful counter-attack through the city centre after losing some positions to government forces fighting from their base in the parliament.

Asked if they were now preparing to storm the parliament, he said: "Yes."

Speaking outside rebel headquarters at the opposite end of Rustaveli Avenue from parliament, Major Lanchava said his National Guards were being backed by the Mkhedroni, an underground opposition group which claims several thousand supporters.

At least half a dozen armoured personnel carriers were stationed on the avenue and some large-calibre machineguns were visible at strategic locations.

Rebels, some wearing helmets and others in distinctive black woolen hats, crouched at corners with rocket and grenade launchers, automatic rifles and other weapons.

"We have enough equipment," Major Lanchava said. "The Mkhedroni brought this and are fighting with us."

Jaba Ioseliani (the Mkhedroni leader) took everything he

had and handed it over to us."

As he spoke, rebels were following up the counter attack around the Hotel Tbilisi, their headquarters before it was destroyed by fire.

"Kutaisi, Kutaisi, Kutaisi," they shouted as a battalion from the provincial Georgian city of that name moved into action, crossing Rustaveli Avenue and advancing towards the Hotel Tbilisi.

"They (Gamsakhurdia forces) went into attack in the morning and occupied some of our positions. A few minutes ago we took them back," Major Lanchava said.

Mr. Gamsakhurdia's men, who have been resisting rebel attacks for more than a week, widened their area of control after opposition military leaders had started to unite against him and called for his resignation at the weekend.

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Spanish king cuts short holiday

BAQUEIRA, Spain (AP) — King Juan Carlos cut short his annual skiing holiday after twisting his knee on the slopes of this Pyrenean resort. An out-of-control skier barreled into Juan Carlos, knocking him down and causing what appeared to be a minor injury to his right knee, a royal spokesman told the Spanish News Agency (EFF). The spokesman said the king was resting in his vacation home near the northeastern Spanish resort but planned to return to Madrid for X-rays. Queen Sofia and youngest daughter Cristina spent the morning on the slopes. The royals had originally planned to stay at Baqueira through next weekend.

Fur coats for the homeless — in sunny California?

SANTA ANA, California (R) — More than 30 women were walking around this post Los Angeles suburb Tuesday sporting fur coats. It's not an unusual sight in southern California where they are worn as a mark of prestige rather than to keep out the cold — but these women are homeless. The furs, all used, were a gift to the women from a local furrier, Ted Bizakis, who explained that he wanted to do something for the homeless at Christmas. The women didn't care that fur coats aren't a dire necessity during southern California's winter, when the temperature averages about 65 degrees Fahrenheit (18 degrees Celsius) and rarely falls below 50 F (10 C). The coats, they said, made them feel good, and when you have no money and no home and it is Christmas, feeling good is important. "It's always been a fantasy to have a coat. Just wearing it makes me feel special," said Simone Leone, who was draped in a full length mink. Bettie Williams agreed. "This (coat) makes me feel important, and I needed that," she said. The coats were delivered to the women as a surprise as they sat down to dinner at a local shelter.

Cicciolina passes political torch to co-star

MILAN (R) — "Cicciolina," Italy's controversial parliamentarian who made a fortune in movies, is returning to the private life of a porn star. But those quirky Italian voters who elected her five years ago need not worry. Her protégé Moana Pozzi, who has co-starred with Cicciolina in many hardcore films, will be running to succeed her in the hallowed halls of the Rome's Chamber of Deputies. Cicciolina, (little caddy one) whose real name is Ilona Staller, announced through her manager that she would not seek re-election to the seat she won on the Radical Party ticket. Ms. Staller, Pozzi, and manager Riccardo Schicchi last September founded the "Party Of Love," whose stated object is to "bring love to parliament." Mr. Schicchi, whose business as porn entrepreneur and agent has received massive publicity since Ms. Staller was elected, said Ms. Pozzi would run in Milan for a seat in parliament in spring elections. "I believe that this society needs more love," Ms. Pozzi, wearing a low-cut dress, told a news conference called to announce her candidacy. "I will do everything physically possible to bring love into parliament."

China issues 'birth control cards' to migrant workers

PEKING (R) — China has enacted new rules requiring millions of migrant workers to carry "birth control cards" to prove they are obeying the one-child-per-family policy, the official China Daily said. The cards, to include information on the bearer's marital status, birth record and use of birth control, must be presented before a migrant worker may take a job, seek a business licence or apply for a residence permit. They will be issued to most of China's estimated 70 million migrant workers, who in the past have often managed to evade the government's birth control teams to have forbidden second, third and fourth babies, the newspaper said. Drawn by the promise of a better life in booming coastal regions, millions of migrants from China's hinterland have flooded into eastern cities such as Peking, Shanghai and Canton to take temporary jobs on construction projects and in factories.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Imelda Marcos to take over party

MANILA (AP) — Former first lady Imelda Marcos was endorsed Monday by her late husband's political party as its candidate for president in next May's elections. Mrs. Marcos avoided making a categorical announcement that she would run in the May 11 election but told about 300 members of the New Society Movement that "what the people ask me to do, Imelda will do." The delegates chanted "Imelda, Imelda" after unanimously approving resolutions declaring the widow of President Ferdinand Marcos as leader of the party and its candidate to succeed President Corason Aquino. Those who attended Monday's convention were die-hard supporters of Mrs. Marcos, and the outcome of the session was never in doubt. "I am open (to running)," Mrs. Marcos told reporters afterward. "I am not disregarding nor obsessing for it." Mrs. Marcos said she would talk with other opposition presidential hopefuls, including businessman Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco, Vice President Salvador Laurel and Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile, to see if they could agree on a single candidate.

Panic causes 8 deaths at U.S. rap game

NEW YORK (AP) — The subterranean gymnasium where eight people died in a crush to get inside for a charity basketball game was jammed with as many as 2,000 people beyond its legal capacity, police said Sunday. "It was oversold," said Mayor David Dinkins. In addition to the eight deaths, dozens were injured Saturday night at the charity event staged at City College by rap music stars. After viewing videotape shot from the bleachers during the melee, police said the gym in Harlem held up to 2,000 people more than its legal capacity of 2,730. Despite the overcrowding, tickets were still being sold at the door, said Mario Salvaggi, a city police patrol chief. Charles Hirsch, chief medical examiner, said the victims all were asphyxiated — "squeezed front to back" — in the stairwell leading to the basement gym. They included three women and five men and ranging in age from 16 to 28.

Corsican separatists blow up villas

AJACCIO, Corsica (R) — Corsican separatists blew up 30 holiday villas on the East Coast of the island overnight after the independence movement pledged to step up its campaign against French rule. Police said a commando group first led a watchman and his family to safety and then laid explosives in a holiday village of 54 villas built near Sorbo Ocagnano. Bomb disposal experts defused seven charges that had not yet gone off. The attack was announced by members of the separatist movement FLNC, who summoned journalists to a secret midnight news conference to tell them the group was escalating its campaign.

Turner names Time's Man of the Year

NEW YORK (AP) — American media mogul Ted Turner was named Time magazine's Man of the Year Saturday by editors who cited the impact of his Cable News Network's (CNN) live television coverage of events around the globe. Mr. Turner, 53, was hailed as a "visionary" whose network changed the definition of news "from something that has happened to something that is happening at the very moment you are hearing of it," the news magazine said. "For influencing the dynamic of events and turning viewers in 150 countries into instant witnesses of history, Robert Edward Turner III is Time's Man of the Year for 1991," the magazine concluded. Mr. Turner, whose Atlanta-based Turner Broadcasting System Inc. also operates Turner Network Television and Cable superstation WTBS, said he was "extremely honoured" by the award, but credited his employees for his company's success. "These dedicated individuals share a common goal of informing, entertaining and inspiring audiences around the world with quality programming," he said. "In accepting this, honour, I salute their efforts."

Actress Cassandra Harris dies

LOS ANGELES (R) — Australian actress Cassandra Harris, who played ex-mistress of her real-life husband, Pierce Brosnan, in the U.S. television series Remington Steele, died Saturday of cancer, her publicity agent said. Harris, 39, waged a four-year battle against ovarian cancer and Brosnan stopped working to care for her and their three children, the publicist, Dick Guttman, said. She died at the University of Southern California Cancer Centre in Los Angeles, where she had been treated for several weeks. "Her courage and strength during her illness made it easier for those who loved her," Guttman said. Harris appeared with Roger Moore in the James Bond film For Your Eyes Only in 1981. Harris was a child actress in Sydney and met Brosnan when she went to London to join the National Theatre. In between stage appearances, she had leading roles in British television productions, including All Out At Kangaroo Valley and The Boy Merlin series. She played Steele's ex-mistress, Felicia, in the television series Remington Steele, but she limited her acting in the United States so she could bring up her children, Charlotte, 19, Christopher, 18, and Sean, seven.

Yugoslav army keeps up attack on Karlovac

ZAGREB (R) — The Yugoslav army kept up a relentless bombardment of the key Croatian town of Karlovac into the night, turning it into the main flashpoint of fighting in the breakaway republic.

"In the past few days, Karlovac has become the main battlefield in Croatia," Croatian radio said.

Karlovac, 55 kilometres south west of Zagreb, is a crucial link between the Croatian capital and the republic's south, including the Adriatic coast.

Police in Karlovac told Reuters by telephone that the town was constantly bombarded throughout Sunday and explosions were continuing into the night.

"It's quiet for about 10 minutes

and then 30 or 40 shells come down at once," the duty officer at the police station said. "They are falling everywhere on every part of the town."

"It gets quiet just long enough for people to feel secure and leave their shelters."

The offensive against Karlovac and rocket attacks on Zagreb's suburbs this weekend marked a serious escalation in fighting between Croatia and the Serb-led federal army.

Croatia said surface-to-surface missiles fired by the army were responsible for six loud explosions in Zagreb Sunday. Western journalists visited the site of two of the explosions and saw craters and damage to houses.

End of an era comes for U.S. army in Europe

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. army has quietly begun an exodus from Europe — a shift in recent weeks that brought home 40,000 soldiers, 48,000 spouses and children, 10,000 pets and 15,000 cars.

The reduction in forces, made possible by the end of the cold war but put on hold during the Gulf war, is in full swing.

Some days, as many as 500 military men and women leave their posts. No one replaces them.

Gen. Gordon Sullivan, the army's top general, said the move reflects the reduced Soviet threat and changed U.S. military strategy, which relies more on forces based at home to deal with crises around the globe.

"It is a different world in 1992 than the world of the last 40 years," the four-star general said in an interview. "We would be foolish not to respond."

Plans for the "drawdown" of army forces in Europe means that by 1995, its four divisions of 213,000 soldiers will be slashed to two divisions made up of 92,000 men and women. Overall, some

150,000 U.S. military personnel are to remain in Europe, but budget pressures may force even steeper cuts.

Most of the soldiers leave Europe for assignments in the United States if they're not being released from active duty, officials say.

Some critics of the military's involvement overseas say the moves can't come fast enough.

"I don't think anybody thinks that there's going to be ... Warsaw Pact troops rolling across the Rhine, and yet we still have massive numbers of people still sitting around there," Rep. Patricia Schroeder, D-Colorado, told reporters recently. "The way we are deployed now just doesn't make sense."

The army had planned to begin moving tens of thousands of troops homeward much earlier, but operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm pulled 76,000 troops from Europe to Saudi Arabia.

Now, transfers have increased in the last weeks of 1991.

Army officials say 40,000 troops left European posts, most in Germany, by the end of 1991.

New Vietnam constitution removes basic Socialist rights

HANOI (R) — Vietnam Monday unveiled a draft constitution that reaffirms one-party Communist rule but removes basic Socialist rights and formalises free market economic reforms.

The document, prompted by the worldwide collapse of socialism, aims to increase the power of the elected National Assembly while curbing the influence of the Communist Party, officials and a member of the assembly said.

The draft, replacing the current 1980 constitution, is expected to be ratified by the National Assembly in April.

"Over the last decade, the world has witnessed profound and all-round changes," Nguyen Huy Thuc, a member of the Constitution Drafting Committee, told a Hanoi news conference announcing the draft.

"Many articles and provisions in the present constitution are no longer suitable and appropriate for renewal and reform of our

party."

He said the revised constitution would be a basis for new laws that "will help us to get our country out of all crises and difficulties and achieve our objective — namely socialism as our people have chosen."

However, the draft formalises capitalist-style economic reforms and removes basic socialist rights guaranteed under the previous constitution, including the right to work, to housing, free health care and education.

"We deemed that we are not able to realise or implement those articles," Mr. Thuc said.

For example, he said, "even among state employees, only about 30 per cent are provided with houses by the state. So if we still maintain the articles that citizens are entitled to housing, I think it is no longer appropriate."

The draft says the state can offer exemptions on school and hospital fees and encourages

citizens to build housing. Although it has begun to attract private foreign investment, Vietnam's economy has suffered greatly from years of Socialist mismanagement followed by a cut in aid from the former Soviet Bloc.

Mr. Thuc said the draft aimed at "political renewal ... but we are not going to carry out political reform in a sweeping manner. We want to have firm steps and measures in order to ensure political stability inside the country."

A National Assembly official told Reuters Friday that the constitutional changes had been prompted by events in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, where Communist regimes have tumbled.

"We have learned from the events so that we can avoid disorder and chaos in our country," Tran Xuan Anh said.

The draft was intended to reduce Communist Party interference

in administration and make government more efficient.

In future, Mr. Anh said, the party would continue to set the general political line but law-making was the job of the National Assembly and the party must obey the law.

The assembly, although in theory the highest state body, has existed merely to rubber stamp Communist Party directives.

Communist abuse of power and influence-peddling has caused widespread resentment and the party has purged thousands of members in recent years in an effort to clean up its act.

Under the draft, the National Assembly is to convene three times a year instead of two and elect fewer, better qualified, delegates.

It will appoint a prime minister with greatly increased decision-making powers, who will choose a cabinet.